

Reprinted from "Copeia" Volume 1973, number 1, 1973, pp. 140-141, Tagatz: A larval tarpon, *Megalops atlanticus*, from Pensacola, Florida. With permission from the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists.

A LARVAL TARPON, *MEGALOPS ATLANTICUS*, FROM PENSACOLA, FLORIDA.—A larval tarpon, *Megalops atlanticus*, an early Stage II as designated by Wade (1962), was collected in the upper reaches of East Bay, about 45 km from the Pensacola Inlet, Florida on 20 October 1970. It represents the second and most northern record of a larval tarpon from the Gulf of Mexico, and suggests late spawning in the Gulf.

Eldred (1968) reporting on the first capture of a tarpon larva (Stage I) in the Gulf, about 117 km due west of Sanibel Island, Florida on 6 July 1967, postulated that its presence could have resulted either from spawning in the Gulf or from being carried northward by transport currents from a more southerly spawning. Eldred's (1967) study on catch records of young indicated that tarpon spawn in the Florida Straits, the Gulf Stream, and the Caribbean Sea during spring and summer. The occurrence of the present early larva in the northern Gulf provides evidence of spawning in a Gulf locality.

The specimen from East Bay was collected unusually late in the year. This may indicate that spawning in the northern Gulf is later than in southern regions. Except for a larva

taken 12 November 1921 off French Guiana, all Stage I and II larvae have been captured from 17 May to 1 October (Wade, 1962; Eldred, 1967, 1968).

The larva was collected in a plankton tow near the entrance of East Bay River in water 1.5 m deep. Surface salinity of the water was 7.3 ‰; bottom, 11.5. Surface water temperature was 20.1° C; bottom, 21.6. Measurements (in mm) of the specimen are 28.5 total length, 25.8 standard length, and 2.6 head length. It has a total of 56 myomeres (39 predorsal, 41 preanal), 13 dorsal rays, and 20 anal rays.

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